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ISRAEL: Israeli Arabs Demonstrate

March 30, 1976

At least seven Israeli Arabs have been killed, more than 20 wounded, and approximately 200 arrested by Israeli security forces attempting to quell today's demonstrations in northern Israel. The disturbances now appear to have died down.

The demonstrations came in connection with an earlier call by Israel's small Rakah communist party for a nation-wide strike today by Israeli Arabs to protest the government's expropriation of land in Galilee; a third of this land is presently Arab-owned. Anticipating possible trouble, the government over the weekend beefed up police and other security forces around Arab population centers and last night imposed a curfew on some Arab villages. It appears that this may have contributed to the violence. Several of the Arabs reported killed were apparently shot while violating the curfew. Their deaths, and the presence of heavily armed Israeli troops probably inflammed the demonstrators and contributed to later rounds of violence.

Most of the demonstrators apparently were Arab students and young people. Although the disturbances had anti-Israeli overtones, the demonstrators were mostly expressing frustrations over what many of them believe to be their status as second-class citizens in Israel.

The disturbances were almost entirely confined to northern Israel. There were some sympathy demonstrations and shop closings on the Israeli-occupied West Bank but no major demonstrations.

The Israeli Knesset will consider a Rakah motion of no confidence tomorrow based on the government's handling of the demonstrations. The government should easily turn this motion aside although it will undoubtedly come under criticism by non-communist deputies for allowing the demonstrations to get out of hand and for the often unrestrained reaction of security forces.

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